

Introducing

AKO

Story by SFC Lisa Beth Snyder

Sign In

Lost Password?

I'm A New User

US Army Certificate

Help

THE Army wants to leverage your intellectual capital to become a knowledge-based organization.

This isn't a top-secret medical project, but a plan to help soldiers and Department of the Army civilians share what they know with each other so the Army can make the best use of the knowledge of its people and the capability of its technology.

"A vast part of an organization's resource is knowledge, which often resides in the heads of its members," said David Hale, senior system analyst for Army Knowledge Online.

The Army wants to provide its members with a way to access quality information, such as a library of after-action reviews or reliable addresses for former classmates at professional-development courses, Hale said.

The members of the current class at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., are the first to be assigned AKO accounts as their primary e-mail addresses.

Since the AKO portal went online in November, more than 70,000 people

have signed on, Hale said. When you first sign on, AKO verifies the information you supply with PERSCOM before granting access.

At the heart of this program is the Army Knowledge Online website.

The portal has "AKO Knowledge Communities," such as the PERSCOM Officer Career Management Center and the Center for Army Lessons Learned. It also has category and general search capabilities, and can be customized with other sites, such as defense headlines, weather, pay tables and any other links that are appropriate to a military site.

Chaplain (MAJ) Richard Lund of the 109th Military Intelligence Group, based at the Royal Air Force's Menwith Hill Station in Great Britain, said he was impressed with the resources indexed on AKO. As a chaplain, he said, he finds items for religious support in many and varied obscure websites, which AKO can locate better than civilian search engines.

"We provide you a standard e-mail address that you get to keep for the rest of your career," Hale said.

This will help soldiers and Army civilians keep in touch with each other from anywhere in the world with just an Internet connection, Hale explained. The AKO e-mail can be accessed by any standard e-mail client, and the AKO portal is accessible from both Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. The e-mail comes with 50 megabytes of storage.

"It was wonderful, discovering that

the Army finally has defined 'permanent' e-mail addresses for each soldier and employee, especially e-mail addresses which can be controlled by the employee to forward to alternate primary e-mail accounts," Lund said.

He also liked the fact that he can even log on from his home computer in the United Kingdom with a British Internet service provider.

Hale said the Army is the only service to offer its members an extensive Internet information system. The Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force don't yet have free service-member e-mail or portals, just sites restricted to dot-mil users in addition to their public sites, he said.

AKO at www.us.army.mil is the Army's intranet site, while the Army



The AKO splash page offers a wealth of information in a variety of categories, as well as links to other useful sites.

Connecting the Army

Story by SFC Lisa Beth Snyder

THE key to staying connected to the Army during and after your time in service is your computer. With a modem or network connection, keyboard and mouse, you are only a few key-strokes away from a wealth of Army information.

Besides the Army Knowledge Online website, a quick search of the web reveals more than a dozen .com or .net sites specifically designed to meet the needs of American soldiers, veterans, military families and civilian workers. And there are thousands more that offer such specialized information as campaign or unit histories.

Many of these sites are run by current or former military members or veterans organizations.

MAJ Nate Allen and MAJ Tony Burgess, U.S. Military Academy classmates and current staff members, have spent a lot of time talking about company command.

Burgess said that they thought, "Wouldn't it be great if company commanders around the world could easily share their ideas and experiences?"

They realized that the Internet was the medium for this forum, said Allen, who is currently attending graduate school. The two joined six other West Point staff and faculty members to operate **CompanyCommand.com**, which allows for real peer sharing of ideas laterally instead of the usual top-down hierarchy, said Allen.

The chief executive officer of **Military.com**, Chris Michel, is a Navy Reserve officer. He was at a naval air station when fellow aviators were lamenting the fact that they couldn't stay connected. He quit his civilian job and developed the website, bringing on board other military members such as retired Army public affairs officer Michael Doble, the company's director of corporate communication.

SSG Don Oliver, one of the creators of **GIsearch.com**, is still on active duty at Fort Jackson, S.C. Oliver said the idea for a free site for old service buddies to find each other came up when talking about old friends with his neighbor, retired NCO Ed McWhirter.

During an Internet search they

found sites that either charged a fee or were just lists with no search features, Oliver said.

"If thousands of people went to the trouble of posting unordered, hard-to-find messages, we were sure many more would appreciate the chance to put their information in a comprehensive, searchable system," he said.

Oliver and McWhirter had their site set up like a convention center with meeting rooms, so people can have a neutral place to meet without giving out too much private information. Members register their names and duty stations in searchable databases.

Most of the listed sites are portals with free e-mail, people searches, news, military history and, of course, advertising for military-related products.

Military.com also offers original content and solution-oriented feature packages that have a mixture of original content and links to sites with more information, Doble said. It also has the first .com-only reporter to be accredited by the Department of Defense.

Military.com also has links to other civilian media sources through investments by Arts & Entertainment Television Networks (A&E, History Channel and Biography Channel) and Primedia, which publishes magazines such as *Military History*.

Other sites, such as Virtual Battalion Headquarters (**vbnhq.com**) and Army HQ (**armyhq.com**) focus on soldiers only. Virtual Battalion focuses on soldiers' careers and features a site devoted to noncommissioned officers, while Army HQ includes sites on home and off-duty life.

Militarycity.com is owned by Army Times Publishing Company, and ties in with and expands on that publication's content.

For Department of the Army civilians, **MyGovClub.com** and **PlanetGov.com** offer news and tools to manage their careers.

Retirees, veterans and family members can find help with their job search on sites tailored to them, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars' **VetJobs.com** and Transition Assistance Online (**taonline.com**), which works with Yahoo! Careers to use its job-search tools.

Stripes.com offers veterans news and history, and military spouse news.

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Homepage at **www.army.mil** remains its public site. As the intranet site, AKO will allow many Army organizations to use a single authentication source, Hale said.

Several organizations are planning to use the portal to communicate with soldiers and DA civilians as part of their mission. For example, the Army Research Institute plans to conduct web-based surveys as part of its data-collection mission, he said.

AKO is being tested by U.S. Army

Training and Doctrine Command for use in military education and distance learning. The Army is also considering plans for a link to the proposed e-Army University.

Whether a senior leader needs planning information for a peace-keeping operation or a private needs to know proper ribbon placement on the Class A uniform, Army Knowledge Online can help them to quickly find and use the best knowledge the Army possesses. □

Other news for Army spouses can be found at armyspouse.com or the online version of Off Duty magazine, Offduty.com.

For the whole family, maingate.com, which bills itself as the online network for military communities, has sections for military news, installation guides, teens, kids and veterans.

When its time for a break from being a technologically proficient, well-informed fighter, these sites may help you plan your off-duty time.

Now soldiers no longer need to lament the difficulty of keeping in touch. With the Internet, the information an Army family needs is just a click away. □

Related Sites

THE following sites were reviewed for the story "Connecting the Army." These sites are not endorsed by the Department of the Army or **Soldiers** magazine.

The sites were selected through a web search and from press releases. All listed addresses begin with <http://>.

armyhq.com

www.companycommand.com

www.maingate.com

www.militarycity.com

www.military-net.com

mygovclub.com

www.planetgov.com

taonline.com

www.vbnhq.com

www.armyspouse.com

www.gisearch.com

military.com

militaryinfo.com

www.military-network.com

www.offduty.com

www.stripes.com

www.totalforceonline.com

www.VetJobs.com



Useful Websites

MOST Army and military sites can be accessed by going to the Army Homepage, the PERSCOM home page or DefenseLink, and clicking on the appropriate icon. This list contains home pages for major subjects and useful sites that can be difficult to find from common military home pages.

All site addresses begin with <http://>.

Department of Defense:

DefenseLink (www.defenselink.mil)

Joint Chiefs of Staff:

www.dtic.mil/jcs/

The Pentagon:

www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pentagon/

Defense Finance and Accounting Service:

www.dfas.mil

Military Funerals:

www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil/

General Army Information:

The U.S. Army Homepage

www.army.mil

The Army National Guard, links to state National Guard headquarters:

www.arng.ngb.army.mil/

Army Reserve, including AR-PERSCOM:

www.army.mil/usar

Civilians—Office of Personnel Management:

www.opm.gov

Retirees:

www.odcsper.army.mil/Directorates/retire/retire1.asp

Veterans:

www.va.gov

Personnel Management:

PERSCOM Online

www.perscom.army.mil/

Retiree, Civilian and Retiree Records:

www.nara.gov/regional/

Civilian Personnel Office:

www.cpol.army.mil/

Soldiers and Families:

www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/family/family.htm

Family, BOSS, MWR, Child and Youth programs:

trol.redstone.army.mil/mwr/

Army Community Service:

trol.redstone.army.mil/acs/index.html

Basic Housing Allowance:

www.dtic.mil/perdiem/bah.html

Army Housing:

www.armyhousing.net/pcs/

Army Career and Alumni Program:

www.acap.army.mil/acap/home.shtml

TRICARE:

www.tricare.osd.mil

www.tricare.osd.mil/tricare/beneficiary/tricareprime.html

Dental Care (TRICARE):

www.perscom.army.mil/tagd/FMDP.htm

American Red Cross:

www.redcross.org/afes/sidepgs/lean.html

U.S. Military Academy, including Preparatory School:

www.usma.edu/

Army Schools:

call.army.mil/call/homepage/sch_army.htm

Joint Service Schools:

call.army.mil/call/homepage/sch_jnt.htm

Soldiers Online:

www.dtic.mil/soldiers

Reserve Officer Training Course:

www.rotc.monroe.army.mil/

Warrant Officer Candidate Center:

leav-www.army.mil/wocc/

Army Education Center:

www.perscom.army.mil/education/

Army Training Support Center:

www.atsc.army.mil/

Army Publications:

www.usapa.army.mil/

Army Values:

www.dtic.mil/armylink/graphics/values.html

Early Bird:

ebird.dtic.mil

Parameters:

carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/

Army Public Affairs:

www.dtic.mil/armylink/

Army Knowledge Online:

www.us.army.mil

Digital Library:

www.addtl.army.mil/atdls.htm

Lessons Learned:

call.army.mil/call.html

